NO SLAVERY IN NEBRASKA.

THE

VOICE OF GOD

AGAINST

NATIONAL CRIME.

BY JOSEPH P. THOMPSON,

PASTOR OF THE BROADWAY TABERNACLE CHURCH.

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SERMON.

IF THOU SEEST THE OPPRESSION OF THE POOR, AND VIOLENT PERVERTING OF JUDGMENT AND JUSTICE IN A PROVINCE, MARVEL NOT AT THE MATTER; FOR HE THAT IS HIGHER THAN THE HIGHEST REGARDETH; AND THERE BE HIGHER THAN THEY.—*Ecclesiastes*, v : 8.

SOLOMON stands pre-eminent among absolute monarchs for the wisdom and the equity of his administration. He ascended the throne in circumstances that favored oppression, had he chosen this method of consolidating his power. His father had secured peace in and for Israel. There were no factions within Israel, there were no foes without. The last public act of David before his death was to designate Solomon as his successor, and to cause him to be anointed by the priests, and publicly recognized by the people. The personal enemies of Solomon, and the adherents of his rival brother, were put out of the way; and he was everywhere acknowledged as

the lawful heir of the throne, and the anointed of the Lord. He formed an alliance with the king of Egypt by marrying his daughter, and he greatly increased his wealth by a successful commerce. By the building of the temple, and by other public works in Jerusalem, he gave employment to the people, and associated himself with their religious sentiment and their national pride. It were easy for him to have become an oppressor. There was no human restraint upon him;—no opposition party, no rival aspirant to the throne, no war impending with foreign powers. Riches, power, authority, divine prerogative, were on his side. Yet at the outset of his reign, Solomon recognized a higher power to which he was amenable as a steward; and when God said to him, "Ask what I shall give thee," he asked neither riches, nor honor, nor long life, nor the life of his enemies, but wisdom, in order that he might do right. "Give therefore thy servant an understanding heart to judge thy people, that I may discern between good and bad."

His first public exercise of this wisdom, in the decision of the case of the disputed child, established his fame for wisdom and equity in all the land of Israel, and extended it to surrounding nations. Though there were no court journals to publish it, and no mails to carry it abroad, the Queen of Sheba heard it in far-off Nubia, and came to render homage to the wise man of the earth, and "all the kings of

the earth sought the presence of Solomon, to hear his wisdom that God had put in his heart."

So long as Solomon lived in the fear of the Lord, and retained a sense of moral obligation, so long did he refrain from acts of oppression. But his very prosperity at length led him astray. He became proud, and worldly, and sensual. His wives of heathen origin corrupted his religious faith, and then he began to trample upon the rights of his subjects, so that he died at last a detested tyrant. For no sooner was he dead, than all Israel came to Rehoboam his son, saying, "Thy father made our yoke grievous; now therefore ease thou somewhat the grievous yoke of thy father, and his heavy yoke that he put upon us, and we will serve thee."

But though Solomon himself became a task-master, through his forgetfulness of God, yet none knew better than he the duties of a ruler, the moral principles that should guide his administration, and his personal accountability to God for the exercise of his civil functions. When he wrote the book of Ecclesiastes as a commentary upon human life—both in its more private aspects, and in its relations to civil government and to the moral government of God—his mind was perfectly clear as to the supremacy of the moral law in matters of the State, and the responsibility of rulers and of nations to a Higher Power. Encountering the sceptic, who would argue from the mal-

administration of affairs in this world, that there is no superintending Providence, no moral government, and no future accountability for wrong-doing, he says, "*If thou seest the oppression of the poor, and violent perverting of judgment and justice in a province, marvel not at the matter; for he that is higher than the highest regardeth; and there be higher than they.*"

The observer of the course of human affairs may be staggered in his faith in God, by the predominance of iniquity; and despairing of any improvement of human society, he may count life itself a curse. Thus Solomon, in the preceding chapter, says, "So I returned"—from my survey of human life—"and considered all the oppressions that are done under the sun: and beheld the tears of the oppressed, and they had no comforter. Wherefore I praised the dead more than the living which are yet alive. Yea, better is he than both they, which hath not been, who hath not seen the evil work that is done under the sun."

But in our text, he recovers from this despondency, and takes a more comprehensive view of the overruling government of God. 'It is not strange that human governments do wickedly; that the strong oppress the weak; that justice is set aside by might:—but God takes notice of it all; and He will one day bring the wrong-doers to a strict account.' Let us examine these statements somewhat in detail.

1. IT IS TO BE EXPECTED THAT HUMAN GOVERNMENTS WILL DO WICKEDLY.

This accords with the history of governments, of every form, and in all ages.

Imagine yourself transported to an island of the Southern ocean, remote from all intercourse with the rest of the world, and peopled by a race that you had never before seen. Yet this people, though thus isolated, are neither savages nor idolaters. They have the arts and institutions of civilized life. Commerce, agriculture, and manufactures flourish. Thrift and enterprise are written upon the whole surface of the island. It smiles beautifully and lovingly under a tropical sun. Its people have the knowledge of the true God. They have schools and churches, books and newspapers, and the Bible in almost every family. They keep the Sabbath, and observe Christian ordinances. They have a written constitution and laws, courts, judges, and a free popular government. They seem to have realized the old Utopian dream, in the perfection of the social state. Freedom, equality, right, brotherhood, are their motto in all public acts, and their staple in all private conversation. Greatly enamored of their speech and their institutions, you take a more deliberate survey of the workings of liberty in this favored isle. You do not expect to find its population wholly free from crime,

but you cannot doubt that here justice reigns supreme over every form of human depravity.

You enter a court-room. The judge is hearing a cause. A prisoner stands trembling at the bar. He has no counsel, and there is no jury; but though this strikes you as a novelty, you imagine that in this favored island every judge is a Solomon, whose personal wisdom and equity are sufficient for the decision of whatever case may be brought before him. Is the prisoner a thief, a forger, a murderer, an adulterer? Has he committed any secret crime against the welfare of this happy commonwealth? Ah, how quickly he will get his deserts! How sure is Justice to overtake him here! You listen awhile to the indictment. But instead of a criminal prosecution, you find that a person in the court-room claims to own the prisoner at the bar. He bought him for such a price, and he ran away. He now identifies him by certain marks upon his person, and demands that he shall be delivered up—when he will either sell him, or whip him into submission. A friend of the claimant swears to the ownership and the identity. Shocked at the audacity of this demand, you yet count it opportune that in this home of freedom you may see how quickly Justice triumphs over might. You listen eagerly to what the Solomon upon the bench will say. But instead of indignantly dismissing the case, he does not even suffer the prisoner to reply to his accuser; he refuses

to take his testimony; and orders him to be delivered at once to the claimant. The poor man begs to be allowed to see his family; to send for his employer in the neighborhood; to send for his minister—for he is a member of a Christian church;—but all in vain. Half an hour suffices to settle the question whether he shall have a family, a home, a church-fellowship, or live like an ox under the lash. Almost bewildered by what you have witnessed, you hasten from the court-room to inform your friends of the improbity of the judge, who has been guilty of this open oppression of the poor, not doubting that they will find some redress for this violent perverting of judgment and of justice. You take it for granted that this is an abuse of power, and a violation of the laws and principles of the island. But they hear the story with the utmost calmness, and tell you that the judge has only done his duty; that he has followed the letter of the law, which gives him a double fee for such a decision; and that it is a peculiarity of liberty in their enchanted island, that it requires such acts of arbitrary power to keep it from bursting asunder by its own exuberance, and to magnify its strength before the world.

Disheartened and perplexed, you hasten to the Hall where the supreme legislature of the island is in session, hoping that this will take up the case and rebuke the injustice of the judge. You find them in

the midst of an animated discussion, in which the words "slave" and "slavery" often meet your ear; and you conjecture that this is really the case in hand. But what is your astonishment to find them debating a proposition to repudiate their own contracts, to break their plighted faith, in order to allow men to buy and sell the poor,—to work them without wages, to govern them with the lash, to keep them in ignorance, to break up family ties and church relations, and to make them as brutes;—to do this in the new parts of the island, just as you now learn it has always been done by privilege, in some of the older settlements. Horrified at such inhumanity and impiety, you are ready to look upon the inhabitants of this Utopia as hypocrites and monsters, and to take passage by the first ship for free and happy America! But if you will consider awhile, you will see that such cruelty and perfidy only identify the inhabitants of your enchanted island with the human family at large; and prove them, with all their privileges, to be at heart no better than the rest of mankind. *If thou seest the oppression of the poor, and violent perverting of judgment and justice in a province,* MARVEL NOT AT THE MATTER.

Consult the records of history, and you will cease to be surprised at such developments. In the earliest known forms of civil government, established soon after the flood, when men were as yet few and

mutually dependent, we find traces of the oppression of the poor. The Assyrian sculptures, and the monumental records of the earliest Egyptian dynasties, show that the enslaving of captives and the grinding of the poor, were practiced by those most ancient monarchies. The pyramids were built by the groans and sweat of unrequited labor. The tombs and temples at Thebes exhibit, as a common incident of life, the peasant toiling under the lash of the overseer. The narrative of Abraham's visit to Egypt shows that the rich and powerful monarch of the land, if so disposed, might rob a stranger of his wife. It was the fear of this that led Abraham to equivocate respecting his relation to Sarah. The story of Joseph shows how common a thing in that age, was the buying and selling of men, and how sure a market there was in Egypt for slaves. He was first bought of his brethren by the Ishmaelitish merchants, and of these by Potiphar. The summary manner in which Potiphar put him into prison, without a hearing, shows the absoluteness of arbitrary power in that land. The enslaving of the Israelites exhibits the same fact. The oppression of the poor, and the violent perverting of judgment and justice, were no marvel in Egypt.

Turning to the land of Israel—a people delivered out of bondage—we behold Solomon praying for

wisdom to do right; discoursing upon the moral accountability of princes; and yet growing at last into a despot, and goading the people, by his oppressions, to the verge of rebellion.

In the Greek and Roman republics, with their boasted freedom, we find the helots of Sparta, the bondmen of Athens, and the human chattels of Rome, subjected to all manner of degradation, indignity, and outrage, deprived of every legal right—their persons, their services, and their lives held at the discretion of their owners. We find the basest intrigue, the most unblushing perjury, the most violent perverting of justice, recorded as the acts of governments that made freedom their boast, that gave laws, arts, and letters to the world.

Passing from ancient to modern times, in the history of Christian nations, we see the same melancholy traces of oppression and injustice on the part of governments toward the poor and the weak. For how long a time did Christian and civilized nations sanction the African slave trade with its revolting cruelties. How many such nations have held upon their own soil—how many still hold—an oppressed and degraded class, denied in whole or in part the rights of men. How often have Christian governments framed iniquity by a law! In foreign conquests, also, what infamy stains the annals of Christian nations;—of Spain in Mexico and Peru; of France in

Algeria; of Great Britain in Southern Africa and in India. Said Edmund Burke, of the British possessions in the East, "Were we to be driven out of India this day, nothing would remain to tell that it had been possessed during the inglorious period of our dominion, by anything better than the orang-outang or the tiger." The chiefs of that country, in their intercourse with British governors, found that "they had to do with men, who either would sign no convention, or whom no treaty and no signature could bind." And in the treatment of the Cherokees, and of other tribes of Indians, till within a few years past, how much there is of dishonor and of wrong, how much oppression of the poor, and violent perverting of justice, to stain the annals of public virtue, in the history of this nation. Perhaps, too, our imaginary island may suggest some home analogies.

We need not marvel, then, that governments do wickedly—that they use their power for injustice and the oppression of the poor. This belongs to their history; it belongs to human nature, of which governments are but the corporate and historical exponent.

Governments are under a strong temptation to commit injustice. They have power in their hands, and there is no human tribunal above them to call them to account. The temptations of present interest are strong. If the government is monarchical and

irresponsible, its leading idea is the consolidation of power and resources about itself, without regard to the rights of the people. To take care of its own family and its own estate is the first concern of royalty. If the form of government is popular, the temptation of those in power is to study interest and policy, more than abstract right and present duty, and so to manage as to retain political ascendancy without regard to the morality of the means.

Moreover in the machinery of government, there is little play for conscience. A government, like a corporation, is a soulless body. The sense of personal responsibility for official acts, is even less vivid in a popular representative government than in an absolute monarchy. Hence what men would spurn to do as individuals, what merchants would consider dishonorable between themselves, what humane men would brand as cruel and wicked if it were a personal transaction, what all Christian men would fear to do under the eye of a holy God, they become parties to, through political platforms and the complicated machinery of legislation. We need not marvel then that governments commit the very crimes for which they would condemn an individual to the penitentiary or the gallows;—that they commission their own officers to do upon their own soil, what they would hang them for doing upon the soil of Africa; that they legalize and protect in a coasting vessel

sailing under their own flag, a traffic which they condemn as piracy when conducted on the open seas under any flag whatever; that they seize, imprison, and sell into bondage the luckless alien wafted from Guinea to their own ports, and send their men of war to the coast of Guinea to run down the freebooters of Humanity. It is no marvel that governments do wickedly.

But the text reminds us of their accountability to a Higher Power. I proceed, therefore, to remark,

II. THAT THE INIQUITY OF HUMAN GOVERNMENTS SHOULD EXCITE NO DISTRUST OF THE GOVERNMENT OF GOD.

(1.) *It should not shake our confidence in the active providential government of God.*

The first and most natural wish of a humane heart at the sight of enormous wickedness, is for power to prevent it. We long to set aside the tyrant and to deliver the oppressed. In our indignation at cruelty and injustice, we are almost ready ourselves to take up the sword and the battle-axe on behalf of Truth, and the Almighty. We feel that if WE had omnipotent power, we would certainly bring injustice to an end. We marvel that God does not do this. And at length, like Asaph, we begin to doubt whether there is a superintending Providence, an observing and righteous Judge, until our steps have

well nigh slipped from the foundation of our faith. But we forget that moral conduct is not within the scope of physical power;—that to sweep the earth with a deluge does not cleanse it from human guilt;—that the new-clad earth—from whose well-watered bosom the dove plucks as a first fruit the olive branch of peace—must witness the inebriety of Noah, the filial impiety of Ham, the curse and oppression of Canaan, the ferocious forays of Nimrod, the impious challenge of Babel, the stupendous idolatries of Nineveh. We forget that the miraculous confusion of tongues, and the dispersion of the human family in feeble sections, did not hinder the strifes of brethren and the wars of nations. We forget that the burning of Sodom and Gomorrah did not consume human lusts, nor restrain from drunkenness and incest the only family preserved alive from the flames. We forget that the plagues of Egypt did not hinder Pharaoh's mad pursuit of the people whom at God's command he had let go into the wilderness; and—what should the more surprise us—that Jehovah's miraculous interpositions for Israel, did not keep them from murmuring, from unbelief, from lustful desires, from rebellion, from idolatry. We forget that the calamities sent upon the land of Israel, drought, famine, pestilence, war, did not deter Jeroboam, Jezebel, and Ahab from crime.

Why judge of the reality of Providence from mere

present physical manifestations? Was there no Providence over Israel because for hundreds of years their groanings in Egypt were unanswered; because a king who knew not Joseph was suffered to oppress them? Did not Jehovah see the oppressions of his people? Did not the God of Jacob regard their cry? Did that Providence sleep like Brahm for centuries, and only wake up at the birth of Moses? Was there no Providence over the church, because for two centuries the Roman emperors were suffered to persecute the followers of Christ? Did that Providence appear at length for the fulfillment of prophecy in the fall of Rome, and was it withdrawn during all the preceding ages of corruption and of infamy?

Is the throne of God fixed in some remote point of space, so that only in great cycles it comes in conjunction with our planet, and leaves it in the interim uncontrolled by divine law? Shall we abandon our faith in Providence, because we do not see it as a swift-footed Nemesis, with rod of iron and whip of scorpions, close on the heel of iniquity? Is there no God, because he does not stalk before us in the cloud by day and in the fire by night? Are we under Fate, or Chance, or under DIVINE LAW, and an intelligent, active, observing Providence?

As human wickedness in the past has not shut out the action of Providence from the world, as human wickedness in the past has served but to develop that

Providence in its mighty sweep of retribution, so the fact that God does not interfere at once by physical omnipotence to suppress human wickedness, should awaken no distrust as to the fact of His government over men. "He that planted the ear, shall he not hear" the cry of the poor and the needy, and the boasts and taunts of their oppressors? "He that formed the eye, shall he not see" the wickedness that is done under the sun? "He that chastiseth the heathen," He that has hurled from their seats of power, Egypt, Babylon, Tyre, Greece, and Rome, and has trodden them as dust beneath his feet, "shall not he correct" the nations that do evil? "He that teacheth man knowledge shall not he know?" Let not the wickedness of nations, that now seems unrebuked, shake our confidence in the government of God. *If thou seest the oppression of the poor, and violent perverting of judgment and justice in a province, marvel not at the matter;* FOR HE THAT IS HIGHER THAN THE HIGHEST REGARDETH,—*and He will manifest Himself in due time.*

(2.) *The fact that human governments commit audacious wickedness, should not shake our confidence in the justice of God's moral government over the world.* The Scriptures teach us that Jehovah does not regulate the world as the watch-maker regulates a clock, or the engineer a steam-engine, by mere mechanism or by physical laws; that his government is not

merely that of natural sequences, or of cause and effect;—but that it is a positive moral government with positive sanctions; a government of Law over intelligent, moral, and accountable beings,—a just and righteous government, established by right authority and upheld by just penalty. The fact of human wickedness, of high-handed national crime, does not militate against the fact that God has a moral government over the world, nor against the equity of that government. The question why God suffers men to do wickedly, is the question why he made man at all? why he made him a man, and not a manikin? why he made a universe of intelligent moral beings with their boundless capacities for happiness, rather than a mere physical universe of trees and mountains, and stars and suns? To give life to a moral being, is to give life to a being of intelligence and will—who *can* do wrong; for, as I have already said, the sphere of moral action is not under the direct control of physical force. To impeach God's justice because of human wickedness, is to impeach his wisdom, and justice, and benevolence, in creating moral beings; in endowing them with the highest capacities for happiness; in putting them under a pure and holy law, and in providing a system of recovery, in view of their fall. It is to hold the ruler responsible for the rebellion of the subject; the builder answerable for the work of the incendiary; the judge amenable for the crime of the criminal.

No; God is just, even though sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily. He has great plans of development, a system of recovery, motives of forbearing grace, working through the ages. But while he waits to be merciful, he remembers to be just. Crime does not gain immunity by delay. The doom of Egypt was threatened ages before her fall. And it came. The fall of Tyre was threatened in the fullness of her pride and power. And it came. The overthrow of Babylon—temporal and mystical—was long foretold. And it came. *God sitteth on the throne of his holiness: the Lord is Governor among the nations. The nation that will not serve him shall perish. He shall not fail, till he have set judgment in the earth. The Lord executeth judgment for the oppressed. He shall arise to judgment, to save all the meek of the earth.*

The temptation of human governments to do evil, and their accountability for that evil to a Higher Power, suggest to us,

1. *The duty of praying for our rulers.* They are in circumstances of great temptation. Accustomed to make law, they are in danger of feeling that there is no law higher than that which they themselves make; and hence of making and repealing laws upon considerations of policy, or of present interest, and not upon the principles of eternal right.

The Legislature of a State may try to shape a law so as to secure the assent of the Governor; the Congress of the United States may try to shape a law so as to get the signature of the President, by conforming to his known opinions. But do these bodies ever ask themselves whether their laws will gain the sanction of Him who is higher than the highest? Our rulers are under a strong temptation to legislate for themselves,—to make personal promotion and party success paramount to the public good. They are under a constant temptation to merge their individuality and their responsibility in corporate acts. Knowing the difficulties of their position, we should not make them the objects either of excessive adulation or of unqualified denunciation. We should pray for them, that they may be kept superior to these temptations; that they may be kept free from ambition, from the spirit of faction, from injustice, impiety, and all iniquity. We should pray for the good, that their faith and their courage fail not in the hour of trial; and for the evil, that their conscience may be awakened and purified, their judgment enlightened and sanctified, their hearts purged from all injustice and wrong, and their wicked or foolish counsels overthrown.

2. *We should bring all possible moral and political influences to bear upon the minds of our rulers in favor of right action.* The subject of Louis Napo-

leon may abhor the perfidy and cruelty of the usurper, but he can do nothing to restrain that usurping and oppressive government from further crime. Indeed, he can hardly venture to express his own detestation of public wickedness. The enlightened and humane Austrian may deplore the wrongs perpetrated by his government against Hungary, Poland, and Italy; but he can do nothing to wipe off the stain. The Russian may detest the unholy war of the Czar against the Sultan; but he may even be compelled to serve in that war. We, however, are in the end our own rulers. The law-making power is derived from us and returns to us. Our rulers can abuse that power only for a season. But we should not suffer them to abuse power without rebuke. Our duties as citizens are not ended at the polls. If we have voted heedlessly, if we have sacrificed morality to party, we have been guilty of a wrong, and must share the responsibility of that wrong. But however conscientiously we have voted, that is not the sum of our duty. We can influence our rulers by encouragement, by counsel, by warning, by petition, by protest, by all manner of moral influence to deter them from crime. And if when we see them about to do iniquity, we fail to remonstrate to the extent of our ability and influence, then in that same measure we are partakers of their guilt.

3. *We should cherish a lively sense of God's govern-*

ment over nations, and a reverential fear of his retributive providence. The influence of this will be twofold;—to give us confidence in behalf of right, and to keep us personally free from the guilt of public wrong.

The first intent of the text is to inspire confidence for the Right, notwithstanding the triumph and the audacity of wrong, and notwithstanding the apparent impunity of wicked men. This confidence is based upon broad and deep views of the government of God; upon the certainty that he sees whatever is passing on the earth; that he regards it in its true character, and that he will in due time requite the evil and vindicate the just. To our narrow vision His time may seem long. The souls of the martyrs may cry from beneath the altar, *How long, O Lord, holy and true, dost thou not judge and avenge our blood?* But his time will come. Through all the strife and confusion of human wickedness, we must never lose sight of the fact that God reigns. We must never give over the Right in despair, nor become indifferent to it because God seems for the moment to pass it by. Nothing can keep us to our duty but the sense of God's continual watchfulness over us and our affairs. Nothing can give us hope and strength for the good and the right, but confidence in God as the righteous Governor and Judge of all. What though governments do wickedly? HE THAT IS HIGHER THAN THE HIGHEST

REGARDETH. What though the strong oppress the weak? THERE BE HIGHER THAN THEY.

But the constant recognition of God's government over human affairs, and of his retributive providence toward nations, will serve to keep us personally clear of all public wrong. In this view, the exhortation of the context is most impressive: "*fear thou God.*" No matter if the multitude are hastening to do evil. Go not with them;—*fear thou God.* No matter if your political party is resolved upon wrong-doing. *Fear thou God.* No matter if you will lose trade, or office, or friends and favor, by protesting against wickedness, and holding to the right. *Fear thou God.* No matter if the government frame iniquity by a law, and attempt to coerce you into wickedness. FEAR THOU GOD. Keep your own soul clear in the matter. Be not thou a partaker of other men's sins.

It cannot be disguised that at this moment, the government and people of the United States are under the temptation to commit an enormous crime; that sectional, party, political, personal, and pecuniary interests are combining to oppress the poor, and to pervert judgment and justice in a province, where hitherto human freedom has been guarded not only by natural law and by abstract right, but by solemn compact. This is not a thing to which we can be indifferent. It is not a question concerning the domestic institutions of other States, over which Con-

gress has no power, and with which we have no right to interfere. It is not a sectional question, nor a political question. It trenches upon no point of State Rights; it invades no guarantee of the Constitution. It is a national question and a moral question. If this wrong is done, it will be done by the representatives of the whole people, in their name and by their authority.

And what is the wrong proposed? It is upon a virgin soil, to introduce and to legalize a system that makes man a chattel, and puts him under the irresponsible will of his fellow; that separates husband from wife, and parent from child, by force and for gain; that keeps God's Word from men made in his image; and that imprisons Christian women for teaching children to read the Bible. It is proposed that this free and Christian nation, with its eyes open, and in the full light of history and of the Word of God, shall legalize this system where it has always been forbidden, shall invite it to enter upon new soil, shall make it henceforth a permanent feature of its national policy;—and this without the least pretense of Constitutional obligation or of public safety. The man who can be indifferent to this, can be indifferent to any crime.

And is it not the indifference of the public conscience to national iniquity that causes religion to decline and languish throughout the land? A few

years since, Christian merchants of this city said deliberately and unblushingly, that though slavery was an enormous evil, and the arguments brought against it from the Bible were true and forcible, they must nevertheless hold their peace about it, and acquiesce in the measures then passed for its support, because the major part of their business was at the South. I know what I say, when I affirm that there were men of standing in the churches, who, in private conversation, thus placed their worldly interests above the admitted claims of Humanity and of the law of Christ. What if such a merchant had said, "I look upon intemperance as a great evil, and I wish it were done away. But I cannot advocate the Maine Law, because, to tell the truth, I have a hundred thousand dollars invested in a distillery." Or what if he had said, "I think well of the reformation at the Five Points, but it must not be pushed too fast; for I hold property in that neighborhood that rents better in its present shape than it would in any other; and from those rents I support my family, pay my pew-rent, and dispense my charities." What would be thought of such a man's Christianity? Yet Christian men *did* say, "We abhor slavery as much as you; but we must not agitate the subject, for we should then lose our Southern trade."

Suppose now a company of such Christians assembled to mourn over the low state of religion, and to

pray for its reviving. Would they not hear the voice of the prophet, as of old, saying, "Is it such a fast that I have chosen? a day for a man to affect his soul? is it to bow down his head as a bulrush, and to spread sackcloth and ashes under him? wilt thou call this a fast, and an acceptable day to the Lord? Is not this the fast that I have chosen? to loose the bands of wickedness, to undo the heavy burdens, and to let the oppressed go free, and to break every yoke? Is it not to deal thy bread to the hungry, and that thou bring the poor that are cast out to thy house, when thou seest the naked that thou cover him; and that thou hide not thyself from thine own flesh? Then shall thy light break forth as the morning, and thine health shall spring forth speedily; and thy righteousness shall go before thee; the glory of the Lord shall be thy rearward. Then shalt thou call, and the Lord shall answer; thou shalt cry, and he shall say, 'Here I am.' If thou take away from the midst of thee the yoke, the puting forth of the finger, and speaking vanity; and if thou draw out thy soul to the hungry, and satisfy the afflicted soul; then shall thy light rise in obscurity, and thy darkness be as the noon-day."*

Can we invoke God's blessing while we connive at public crime? Is not the deterioration of the public conscience, through political and commercial subservi-

* Isaiah viii.: 5—11.

ency to oppression, acting with a most depressing power upon the vitality of the church. Do not we feel the reaction of a public guilt for which "nobody is to blame."

Would that I might stir up your consciences to recognize the retributive government of God, and to free yourselves from personal guilt in this matter. I speak in no narrow, sectional, or party spirit. I belong to no anti-slavery society, and to no political party whatever. I plead for the honor of Christ's name; for his suffering cause; for the dignity of Religion; for the sake of Humanity; for the sake of Liberty; for the honor and safety of my Country. I fear that this wickedness will be consummated. It will be no marvel if we see the oppression of the poor. And then it will be no marvel if our children see a prostrate commerce, a servile insurrection, or a civil war.

Have we a world-wide commerce, whitening every sea? So had TYRE—the queen of the seas—whose merchants were princes; who trafficked in the gold of Ophir, the pearls and spices of Arabia, and the fine linen of Egypt; who made the sea her ramparts, and lined the coast with palaces. Yet I have seen her naked rocks a place for fishermen to spread their nets. Have we vast agricultural resources? So had SYRIA, whose plains the ancients styled celestial—the granary of empires, the garden of the world. Yet

have I seen her plains all desolate, Lebanon stripped of its glory, and the gorgeous temple of Baalbec, that gives us no data of its history—the grandeur of Egypt moulded by the grace of Greece—crumbling in the conflict with time, like "a mountain of carved rock in the desert." Have we wealth and power? So had THEBES, the mother of empire, in her dim antiquity more grand than the greatest cities of the living world. Yet have I seen the hundred gates of her temples shattered and wasting on her deserted plains. Have we extent of territory, science, art, political freedom, social culture? So had ROME, who sat upon her seven hills, and gave law to Greece, to Egypt, to Syria, to Persia, to Germany, to Gaul, to Spain, and to Britain. Yet have I seen that once proud capital reduced to a few broken pillars and crumbling walls. There is a God over the nations; and for no sin does he rebuke them so fearfully, as for the sin of oppressing the poor. And now in face of a wrath written on the graves of all past empires, shall this nation dare to oppress the poor? Let us hasten to acquit our souls of this stupendous crime. When God shall make inquisition for blood, he will remember the cry of the needy. In the day of final judgment, He will seek out all the oppressors of this land. You cannot then skulk behind a political platform, or hide in the shadow of your representative in Congress. You must meet the wrong face to face; unless by all your

influence, you now oppose and seek to hinder it. Whatever judgment may befall our guilty nation, he that taketh warning shall deliver his soul. And if you will not take the warning, yet must I give it, and comfort myself with the assurance given to Ezekiel—THOU HAST DELIVERED THY SOUL.